

MARTOS GALLERY

Mahoney, Robert, "Aura Rosenberg, 'Who am I, What am I, Where am I?'," *Time Out New York*, 1999

Aura Rosenberg, "Who am I, What am I, Where am I?"
Wooster Gardens, through Sat 16
(see Soho).

With her project "Who am I, What am I, Where am I?," Aura Rosenberg offers a solution to the ultimate dilemma of the modern artist/mother: If you're tormented by the kid taking time away from your art, why not make the kid your art? Problem solved for the art, but what this strategy says about the state of motherhood these days is another matter.

Rosenberg certainly involves her daughter, Carmen, in her work. She asks other artists to paint Carmen's face, then takes photographs of the results. She also gets artists to paint the faces of other kids and their own children's as well. I'm going to give Rosenberg (and everyone else involved) the benefit of the doubt and assume that they all thought the idea was fun—and, most important, that they remembered to ask the kids if they thought it was fun, too.

While the 50 or so photos here run the gamut from sweet to downright weird, none of these images rise to a level beyond that of a curious by-product of a particular artist's imagination. Genuine tenderness is shown in only one image: James Hyde's drawing of glasses on Louis. Vik Muniz makes upside-down faces on Gaspar's forehead, and Cara Perlman makes Bogyi up in a war paint of abstraction—the ultimate art kid.

But the fun starts to curdle when Dennis Kardon paints Julia to look like her beagle. Aren't kids supposed to be higher on the totem pole than their pets? Seeing Jason Murphee's depiction of Solomon as a trophy head on the wall also made me uncomfortable. And it seems that Laurie Simmons has become blinded by her own ego; she thought it would be funny to present Lena as one of her signature puppets.

Finally, what mother would let Mike Kelley anywhere near her daughter? Kelley does Carmen up as a Goth wench, complete with heavy eyeliner, pouty lips and



Aura Rosenberg, *Dan Graham/Carmen*, 1996–98.

deep cleavage where none exists. When an adult artist explores his or her personal infantilism, fine. But when those feelings spill onto an actual child, it's therapy time.
—Robert Mahoney